

# Mermaid Turned Monster

by OfTalesLongLostOfInnocence

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Summary: When their friendship gets twisted, and with the knowledge three will never become four-Someone gets murdered. Someone becomes a murderer. Someone is caught in the middle. And, someone is wrongfully blamed.

## 1. You Will Never Understand My Secrets

**\*\*Mermaid Turned Monster**

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Written by **\_\*\*OfTalesLongLostOfInnocence\*\*\_**

**\*\*\_A/N:** This story tells the tale of a wicked murder that takes it's toll on the mermaid sisterhood that is found within the clique of Emma, Cleo, Rikki, and Bella. One of them will be murdered. One of them will be the murderer. One of them will be caught in the middle. And, one of them will be blamed. Inspired by Accused At 17. Don't forget to review your heart's desire out!\_\*\*

. . .

Helicopters are flying. Crime-scene tape is hiding away a gruesome image. Hikers are telling the story of how they found the disturbing sight to police. Pictures are being taken of the deceased girl lying in Mako Island's underground volcano cove. News cams are rolling with reporters wondering the terrifying truth that will hopefully be uncovered soon. DNA tests are being done. People are rushing in hope to revive the body, but realizing, with despair, the teenage girl's spirit is long gone, and all that waits is a cold dead corpse of a girl that hid the secret of her mermaid identity and then was killed by another mermaid, who turned so quickly from a mermaid to a monster.

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**\*\*Five Days Earlier\*\***

Emma

I walk through the college campus with complete and utter control and contentness. This is the school I applied to return back to the Gold Coast so I could reunite with my best friends, Cleo and Rikki. Although the new coming of another mermaid; Bella, was unexpected, I feel as though they've all been very happy and warmed to see me. Life was so simple; it could have been considered bliss.

I see Rikki and Cleo whispering, and then laughing before Rikki points out something to Cleo with seriousness. Cleo hesitates, then nods quickly. They're up ahead near the Art Wing. I'm surprised to see them not wholesome as a group, without Bella. I wave, and linger hoping they'll embrace me into their threesome as we were before, when Bella wasn't here.

When they don't, my eyes move to find Ash, my long-reunited boyfriend, listening to his earphones. I scurry to catch up with him. "Ash!" I smile when he stops, and take advantage of the fact we both promised to come back to the Gold Coast and finish college courses here after we both moved away and explored some of the world, unfortunately, not together.

He smiles at me, and then glances at his friend to head away, so we can be the perfect bliss that is Emma and Ash. Ash and Emma.

"Hey!" I squeak with happiness. He takes my hands.

"Did you get my text?" He questions. My smile wobbles.

"Yeah, but you know I can't go tonightâ€¦ I have that stupid late birthday dinner thing with Thomas." I sigh, and remember my life isn't completely perfect. My mum and dad had decided in the middle of our worldwide trip, to get divorced, or separated, as they liked to call it. They said Elliot and I would split the rest of our travels with them, because they couldn't stand to be together. I went with Dad first to Hawaii, and all these other enigmatic places. Two weeks after I started traveling with mum, we received news Dad had been burned to death in a fireâ€¦

Now my mum dated this guy named Thomas. I tried to be happy for her, but didn't she see nobody could ever replace my dad? Tonight was the night Thomas was cooking up some cuisine for me in order to impress meâ€¦ it was for my birthday, which was two months ago.

"So? Cancel. It's gonna be the best college party of the year!" Ash replied with simplicity, as he knew that the truth was I shouldn't have cared to make my mum's wishes for me and Thomas to get along a reality. But, at the same time, I hated letting mum down. I did want her to be happy.

"Plus," Ash went on, "I got Dan's older brother to go buy us some of that mango rum you like." I smiled. I did like mango rum. It was the first thing I drank after I got over my phase of refusing to drink alcohol because it didn't go along the terms of Emma's responsible college code.

"Okayâ€¦" I sigh, and give an innocent hopeful smile. "I will try to

get out of it." I giggle, already beginning to conjure up a speech to give to my mum on why I should go to this party.

"Perfect." Ash replies, and gives me a toe-tingling kiss, before I smile in love's happiness. "See you after Teneth's lecture." His hands leave mine, and I watch him go, before heading towards where my lecture would take place.

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I see a familiar figure of dirty blonde hair and tan skin peering into a compact mirror. I bite my lip; Bella. I squeeze a smile on my lips, in an attempt to look nice.

I linger over and remember the headband that she left on the table of Rikki's Caf  when I had announced my return. I was the only one who saw it lying on the floor where she dropped it.

"Oh, Bella? You dropped this at the Caf ." I smile and hand the headband to her. Bella slowly takes it, and inspects it as if the germs from my hand could swallow her whole.

"Oh, thanks, Em. It's okay if I call you that, right? You know, since we're all supposed be friends now " She clips her compact mirror shut, and I nod an 'of course'.

"Ugh, I got a forty-percent on that essay I wrote for Professor Simpson's class. I swear, he has this personal grudge against me." Bella lets out a frustrated sigh, and I search myself for an understanding considerate nod. Truth be told, I received an A for an assignment he gave my class. But, of course, I don't tell her to brag that in. I shift my long blonde hair's position, and flicker my blue eyes nonchalantly.

Bella waves a bye, and I notice her eyes widen when she sees two familiar best friends coming our way. Rikki smirks in her fiery aura, with her blonde curls and blue, blue eyes, as Cleo follows with her adorable tan complexion and sweet brown eyes and slick-straightened brunette hair. Instead of Bella staying, she stares to the ground, and hurries away from us.

"Hey, stranger! How's the responsible and yet utterly perfect world of Emma Gilbert?" Rikki asks with slyness, not knowing how imperfect my life has turned from the day we said goodbyes before her and Cleo's Senior year, and my travels around the world. "You actually look troubled and nearing an irresponsible if I didn't know you " Rikki ends her comment.

"Everyone's going to this freaking party tonight " I say, hoping I don't sound like the majority of the people surrounding me influence me, which is the role I do not play, but am nearing a future of. Truth is, the Emma Gilbert Rikki and Cleo know has changed drastically since our saddened goodbyes.

Cleo giggled and nodded in anticipation. Rikki smirked, and boosted a, "Hell yeah. Zane's ordered like twelve kegs, can you believe it?" She exclaimed, with some pride clinging to her statement her boyfriend was going to throw a crazy sick party.

"Lewis is even bringing some type of special champagne, just for him

and me." Cleo announced and clapped at the anticipation for yet another terrific college party that could zoom them away from the snooze of our own lives.

I sighed, with reluctance, and Rikki meets my glare to the ground, and immediately guesses correct.

"Oh, please tell me you got out of that lame dinner with your mum's new boyfriend!" So clearly, Rikki understands my life isn't as perfect as it used to be. Cleo knows too. But, they must think this is normal. Their own parents did split, and they seem fine with it. Of course, their leaving parent didn't just die in a fireâ€¦ Will I be fine with it in a couple of months?

"Wellâ€¦no, I can't. He got my mum and I's favorite lobster dish shipped out from Maine or somethingâ€¦" I stifle on words, and see doubt and disappointment relish in their faces. I find an edge of happiness cause they clearly do want their old, maybe still best friend, Emma Gilbert, at a party with themâ€¦probably to make sure they don't get too drunkâ€¦but either way.

Rikki's blue eyes dimmed, and then arrived at a light bulb's gaze, as she piped an idea. "Okay, so here's what we're gonna do. You're gonna call your mum right now, and tell her my cat died." Rikki replied simply.

"What!" Cleo and my own self's laughs echoed in the hallway and I got a glimpse of old times, so much, I didn't even think to wonder why Bella had just disappeared the way she did.

"Yeah. Scruffy. The college found out I was keeping him in dorms, and they put him in the cat-pound where he was givenâ€¦three days to live, let's say. And, I am super broken up about it, and I need my two best friends there to comfort me." Rikki finishes, and I grimace, thinking my mum would never care about Rikki's pity storyâ€¦well, perhaps, she'd care, but she wouldn't let me miss the dinner because of it.

"Oh, come on. We both know Cleo will totally vouch for you if your mum ever asks." Rikki states, and Cleo nods.

"Rikki, you don't even have a cat." I reply with smart-assy-ness. Which, Rikki rolls her eyes to.

"Not anymore. Cause he just died at the poundâ€¦while I watched." Rikki said, her traits of charming lying sinking into my aura. "Trust me, it'll work, okay? Cleo and I got to get off to Simpson's lecture, but call me."

They turn heels, as Cleo calls a, "See you later, Em." as they walk off, side by side, in total perfect friendship-hood. I offer an exaggerated, "Byeee.", when Rikki looks back at me in seriousness.

"Do it, it'll work. Okay?" I nod, as she calls her own Rikki-style, "See you later". I am left near my lecture room, with two minutes to spare as I consider my options of lying, persuading, or ditching.

Within seconds, I am calling mum.

"Poppy Businesses. This is Lisa." comes her routine-voice ready for strict profession.

"Hey, mum. It's me. So, I know Thomas bought all those fish for tonight, and I think that's super-nice of him and stuff, but something came upâ€¦" I get to the point, in my own rambling-way. I wait for my mum's disgrace.

"What came up, Emma?" Her voice is sharp but reflects some worry.

I glance back at the class, already starting to fill up. "Well, I can't explain it right now because I have to go, but, uh, can you tell Thomas that we'll just do it tomorrow night insteadâ€¦?" I bat my luck, by trying to sound innocent, yet firm.

"You can go later. What came up?" My mum slightly swerves to being upset voice chimes in. She's okay for now, but she's slowly getting pissed.

I gulp, knowing this is my time to lie. "It's Rikki. She's really upset because, umâ€¦" I stop, because I know I cannot go on. It's a ridiculous story. "Okay, there's this party tonight, and she's going. And so is Cleo. And, Ash is too. And, I-" I get caught off by my mum's disastrous voice.

"Are you kidding me? Do you know how much work Thomas put into setting up this dinner for you tonight?" She gulps strictly, in her no-tolerance mode.

"No, I know." I scramble to explaining. "But-"

"Emma, you changed the date once before to go to Ash's honor-night. You're not doing it again. They'll be other parties." She says, as if it is the end of the discussion.

I have more to say, but I know it will do no use. She has made up her mind. "Fine." I reply, with bitterness oozing from my voice. I hang up, without saying bye, and quickly rush into the lecture room. Annoyance, which will soon turn to anger, starts steaming out of me.

. . .

Bella

The nighttime soon came, as did the party of that night. I smirk into the night's drunken glow, which I found from the crescent moon hanging in the sky. The smile placed on my face is fake, oozing chemicals that I hope will keep me from breaking down. But, my life is scattered into broken pieces right now.

The girls hate me. Rikki has devil horns piercing out of her skull for me, all because of what Will told happened between him and I; a lie. Since when do you listen to your best friend's boyfriend before your best friend? It appears that Cleo is also brainwashed by Will, aka Rikki, so I feel like I'm standing in a dark pit of loneliness.

I stumble, upon the grass, and watch some of the beer Zane supplied,

soak into the ground, as I flicker my eyes, trying not to remember Will and I. \_I try not to remember coming to his dorm, with a red gown, and a smile awaiting an anniversary surprise—and then—the infidelity event that took place. Will was on top of a blonde-headed girl. They were—half-naked, and nearing far more. I never got a look at her face, because all I could see was Will and his body falling in love with somebody else.\_

\_ I ended up knocking down his shell cabinet, and kicking it's fallen remains. I started screeching at him, as the girl hid her face and ran into another room. He plead with me, that things could be 'fixed', as he called it. I didn't listen to him, and I told him we were done, forever.\_

\_ The next day, I confronted Rikki and Cleo to tell them the news, and they stared to the ground and told me that wasn't what Will told them. Apparently, Will had told Rikki that \_I \_was the one who had cheated on him! Rikki told this to Cleo, and like backstabbing friends; they started avoiding me like the plague. When I confronted them about this hideous arrangement, they told me that I was no longer welcome to be their friend. The world was so weird at the moment, I almost felt like I was dreaming. But, when I saw Rikki's selfish sly face, and Cleo's sad pity face, and the way they turned their heads away and just left—I knew I was going to be soon replaced by that Emma girl.\_

\_ I didn't hate her for it. I hated my old friends for ditching me for such an untrue reason. Even if what Will had said was true, real friends were supposed to stick by each other, always. In some ways, I hoped they wouldn't damage and leave Emma—I knew Cleo was a shadow of Rikki's, and I knew Rikki always had her way—but I had no idea why it was Will's words that made her hate me so much—|\_

I started choking, or maybe, it was pre-vomiting, as I clung to the ground. Slowly, but surely, I got up. The world around me was dizzy, all blurry faces. I didn't recognize anyone but knew my ex-best friends must be somewhere near. Slowly, I found my way to the first doorway, as my arms were in chilling goose bumps in the nighttime air. I felt alcohol splash on me, I looked around, and I raced into the little room.

A boy with charming dark hair and an adorable smile was drinking his heart out to some bottle with some weird-looking alcohol. He was so gorgeous; I couldn't help but freeze in awkward-drunken-smiling. Maybe he could get my mind off Will, and the girls.

"Oh—hey. I'm—Bella." I say, trying to wipe away the drunk dizzy spells and concentrate on his face. He stopped gulping down the rum, and smiled at me in my dazzling silver dress. I loved this dress. He looked like he did too, and maybe even what came under it.

"Uh, hey—I'm Ash." He smiled a perfect good-boy smile. And the name Ash rung in my mind. Where had I heard that before? In some conversation—but I couldn't remember. He was just so cute—|

"I was wondering where all the gorgeous guys went!" I slur, with a follow of drunken giggles, as I shut the door, making sure to lock it. My eyes dare a stare at the bottle he's holding. "What's that?"

He looks down at it with a small smile. "Rum. Mango." I start to edge closer to him, and that powerful scent of mango rum. I, myself, happened to love mango.

"Yummy." I replied, as my eyes flickered flashes of green that usually put guys through dazes of fantasy. "Aren't you going to share?" Ash looks back at me with some uncertainty for a moment, then looks back down at the rum, and nods. He fills the red cup I'm still holding in my drunken mode, as I laugh uncontrollably, because someone is finally being nice to be. Being civil, human.

I take a long sip, and throw all of my soul's anxiety and worry away, and gulp down the exotic flavors. My eyes blink for a moment, and when I open my eyes to Ash, I know tonight will be a very nice night. Tonight will be a night where I might even forget about Will.

. . .

Emma

"Doesn't he have a gorgeous view?" Mum asks, as I stare off into the ocean's reflection of the crescent moon hanging high in the sky, as Mum, Elliot, and I are safely dining inside Thomas's screen-in porch. The way the ocean meets his house reminds me of Mum, Dad, Elliot, and I's old house as a family. And I wonder if Mum views it the same.

I just gulp, determined to be in a perfect pissy mood that will tell Thomas that he is never going to be my father.

"Uh-huh." I reply, and close my eyes, pretending I'm somewhere having fun.

Elliot nods, and rambles about how awesome his new diving class is, and how he can see all the reefs and fish from where his class goes. Always on a new adventure, Elliot is.

Soon enough, Thomas comes through the room with four plates filled with delicious lobster. "Here we are." He smiles right at me, as he places it in front of Mum, Elliot, and I. I look down, fighting between hiding my disgust, and spitting it out all over his face. He's not ugly, but I feel like he has the personality of a sponge. And, he will never be my father.

"Oh, wow!" My mum exclaims, playing the enchanted submissive girlfriend that finds her boyfriend to be the most wonderful thing that was ever put into her life. "Thomas, this looks amazing!"

Elliot agrees, and starts digging in, without a care in the world.

"Thank you." He replies with annoying ease, as I wipe my face with the cloth-napkin, even though I haven't ate anything, before I place it down on my lap. "Everything okay, Emma? Your mother says that lobster is your favorite."

He notices my blue eyes looming into the what-ifs I am concocting that all revolve around if I was at that party. If I was there, Rikki, Cleo, and I could be reconnected for good. If I was there, Ash

and I could be making out to fun upbeat musicâ€¦|unlike this depressing porch.

"Yeah, no, this is greatâ€¦|" I sigh, and fake a smile as I stare at the lobster's claws, wishing I could have them to claw my mum's face off. It pisses me off so dearly that we are eating the exact meal that was my own dad's favorite. Were Thomas and mum complete morons? Or did they like the awkward feeling of unwanted dÃ©jÃ  vu?

Thomas returns the smile with a sincere one, before he lays his napkin back down. "Oh, I forgot the butter. I'll be back." Thomas smiles at my mum, and leaves the back-porch. \_Who forgets the butter for lobsters?\_

I don't meet my mum's gaze and just watch intently, as Elliot swallows more and more lobster, without any butter. When, I feel her eyes still burning into my neck, I look back at her and snap, "What!"

"Don't do this." She says sharply, but I notice her eyes pleading for me to like Thomas. I gasp as if I have no clue what she's talking about, and roll my eyes severely. "Fix the attitude. Now." Mum orders.

I glare at my plate, and gulp. This night is treacherousâ€¦| I really should have gone to that party. If only I had listened to Rikki, of all people, and told mum that her cat diedâ€¦| I'm sure all of my friends are having a much better time there than I am, suffocating in my mum's venom hereâ€¦|

. . .

\_Bella\_

Ash is holding my hand so sweetly, I want to almost claim his as my own. Soon enough, I'm holding on too him, as my mind oozes in and out of reality. He's smiling. He likes me. I like him. Maybe my life isn't completely lost after all.

And then, all I know is my lips are touching his. We start making out, and soon enough, we are exchanging not only saliva, but our tongues. He's holding me so sweetly, throughout the entire time. I pull his body, his abs of heaven's qualities, and his belt toward me. I fumble on how to unbuckle it, and at first he freezes. Until, slowly, he helps my hands find a way to free him of his clothes, my clothes, and all the rest of life.

We fade in and out of kisses, and soon enough, he's on top of me. And, as I let someone enter me in my drunken stateâ€¦|I forget all about my problems, names of boyfriendsâ€¦| I just let life slip away, in perfect blissful lustful passion.

. . .

\_Emma\_

I stir my fork within the last remains of the delicious lobster, although, I don't want to admit this. That would be the reason why I'm mixing the lobster tail with the plate's patterns, with a displeased expression tingling on my lips, just to piss off

mum.

"So, since this is for Emma's belated birthday, I think it is time for Emma to open up her gift." Thomas wipes his mouth, and smiles a long I'm-going-to-be-your-step-father-and-ruin-you face. My ears pick up. A gift? Wannabe-Daddy has gotten me a gift!

"No fair! Mum met you two freaking weeks after my own birthday!" I want a gift." Elliot chides, and Thomas laughs and mumbles off a charming line. Sickeningly, I watch them bond. Yuck.

I watch as Thomas hands me a small white box wrapped with a red bow. He glistens an easy-going heartwarming smile, and for a moment, I like him. I smile, as I investigate the box, thinking up all the possibilities.

"Thomas had it designed especially for you." Mum brags, and smiles a hole into her face. My heart warms up in surprise, as I slip the top off to reveal a pair of beautiful mermaid earrings. My unsafe-radar starts beeping inside my head, and confusion crinkles inside of me. Does Thomas know?

Silence fills the air, as the only thing I can hear is the crickets chirping. I gulp uncomfortably. I put the top back on the earring's box, and stare vacantly at my shoes.

"Honey, what's the matter?" Mum asks, with a saddened disappointed face. She thinks or wants to believe I'm having a serious meltdown, and not because I don't like the mermaid earrings. Then, it clicks. The mermaid poster in my old room, the one dad gave me, in Hawaii.

"Why would you even get me that?" I ask, staring at Thomas, trying to make ridicule at the inexistent hairs in his nose. It was too weird for my mum's boyfriend to get me some earrings that screamed my secret identity, which was also found on a poster in my room, which was a gift from my dead dad.

"You have that poster in your room that you love, and I thought I'd get you something that reminded you of it." Thomas answers, questioning all. He doesn't seem to realize why I'm freaking out over this entire exchange.

"The poster that my dad got me in our trip to Hawaii." I say, accusation threatening my upset voice. I don't want Thomas anywhere close to our secret. I don't want him close to anything that was my dad.

Crickets chirp for an eternity, while Thomas lets this sink in, and mum decides to speak for him. "Yes, and you can take those with you when you return there for your college travel exchange next year. It's a very thoughtful gift."

Thomas interrupts her. "Lisa, it's okay." He returns his eyes on me. I see Elliot slowly edge his chair away from this conversation. "Emma, I'm sorry. I didn't know that was where you got the poster."

Realization and a pummel of anger blasts through me. "No, of course you didn't. How could you, since she never talks about him?" I edge

my voice with upset sadness.

"That's enough." Mum says sharply, and scowls her lips together.

"Well, you don't." I fire back.

"That's enough!" Her voice rises again. "We're changing the subject. Elliot, tell us about your friends-"

"What a surprise." I slur, with an eye roll and a scowling shake of my head. "Of course, you'll do anything to avoid talking about dadâ€|who I loved. It's almost disgusting."

I stare, cheeks burning, eyes hiding hidden tears, and let the night go onâ€|

. . .

We are back at mum's house. She wanted me to join her and Elliot in a movie-night in which I could act like it was 'old-times', when I was back living with her. In my cherished old times, we were actually a family.

I angrily stomp, trying to find the haven that would be my room, before Mum's awkward voice heightens at me. "Where are you going?"

"I'm changing clothes, and going to that party." I state with obvious sass doing my tongue in spirals. I near closer to my room.

"No, you are not!" Mum shouts, with her eyes asking if her daughter has turned into an absurd rude monster.

"Mum!" I scream, my own eyes asking if she really thinks she has a hold on me since I don't even live with her even more.

Elliot eyes both of us, and runs up into his room, not wanting to be part of a Mummy-versus-daughter showdown. When dad was here, we never had these.

"I am so mad right now, I don't even know what to say to you!" She slams the back door, and challenges me into her wrath.

"\_You \_are mad! Why should you be mad? You got what you wanted, I went to Thomas's stupid dinner!" I exclaim, feeling anxiety picking up in my bones. I have been wanting to scream at my mum forever. I am finally ready to let, or scream it out.

"Oh, yeah, Emma, that incredibly enjoyable dinner was exactly what I wanted." She shakes her head at me, and scatters her car keys away.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Sarcasm I never knew I held within me rattles out my mouth, "that you just wanted us all to sit there and pretend to be a happy little familyâ€|" I squint my pupils at her, willing them not to break down into tears.

"I wanted you to be civil to a man that went out of his way to make you feel cared about!" Mum's nearing her hysterics now. I see tears

reflecting weakness out of her eyes. I don't care that Thomas 'went out of his way to make me feel cared about'. He's still my mum's boyfriend, and is still pretending to be dead Daddy.

Mum goes on. "Ever since he missed your birthday last month, he has been thinking about getting you that present! It meant a lot to him!" Mum screeches one last time, before she turns, heading away into her room, knowing that the night is forever ruined of her perfect family fantasy.

Then she stops, "And, since when do mermaids have anything to do with your father!" She's right. They don't. And, they sure as hell will have nothing to do with my mum's boyfriend. Being a mermaid is my secret, one that Thomas has nothing to do with.

"You don't get it, Mum." I whine, wishing, just for once she would understand.

"So, explain it to me." Her eyes wave another challenge, and for once I just wish I lived in the moon pool, where all the magic understood me and my emotions.

"Just because you stopped loving dad, doesn't mean I did." My heart pours a sob-fest into my voice. "I loved him, and I miss him! And, I know that you don't want me to have anything special with him, but that trip meant something to us, and you can't just take that away!" One solid tear falls from my eyes, down my cheek. It is followed by another, and I will my mum to say she understands, and that everything is going to be okay.

She stays silent. I turn my head, and leave holding my purse which holds the clothes I wanted to change into for the party. But, right now, I'm feeling too gone. Not in Emma-party mode.

"Emma, I did love your father, and I am glad you had something the two of you could share." She says sternly, but I know she's bluffing. She always does.

"How? Oh yeah, you loved him so much, that's why you didn't let him come back, and be part of our family!" I stamp my high-heels, and emotion-laced tears escape me. "Yeah, right, you loved him a hell of a lot, mum!"

I shake my head, pouring my soul's secret feelings that usually rake away at my skull, spoil into the room. And then, quickly, before mum can say anymore, I run into my old room.

I slam the door, and slouch in the darkness. I throw my purse, and coat down to the floor, and cuddle alone on the bed. It is certainly not a night of parties, but a night of me crying my sorrow off. I cling to my old dolphin I used to sleep each night with. I never brought him to college.

The poster hanging above my head, I also never brought to college. It has three mermaids lounging happily on Hawaii's beaches. Dad and I found it at a weird surf shop, and I instantly fell in love with it.

I let all my tears have one final plummeting escape as I stare at the picture that hangs on my bedside table. A photograph of my family,

wholesome and happy. Dad, Mum; completely in love. Elliot, me; perfect siblings. I stare at the picture, wishing my dad could come and tell me that everything would be okay.

But, by the evening of tomorrow, and the worrisome events that would come after it, I would learn that nothing would ever be okay again.

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**\*\*\_A/N:** And, wala: That is the premiere of Mermaid Turned Monster! I hope you enjoyed it, and are already concocting predictionsâ€|who will get murdered? Who will murder? Who is caught so tragically in the middle? And, who, will be wrongfully blamed? I can give you a hint, each answer is one of our favorite mermaids from Australia! â€|But these mermaids develop darker souls than would ever be shown on TVâ€| Don't forget to review your mind, heart, and soul out! It will reek of inspiration and give me the fulfillment to continue in the lovely disorder that will be found in thisâ€|tale. :)  
-oftaleslonglostofinnocence\_  
><strong>

## 2. The Murder Of Bella Hartley

**\*\*Mermaid Turned Monster\*\***

Written By\_**\*\*OfTalesLongLostOfInnocence\*\***\_

**\*\*A/N:** Thank you, cat loving angels (strange mix-up of my reviewers' screennames) for your reviews for the first chapter! I can't wait to keep the enchantment of thrills and mystery that is to come alive on our computer screens! I hope you read this chapter, and with petrified emotions blaring out of your mind, you find it in your heart to review and tell me all your thoughts on this second chapter. (Even if you're no cat lover, or someone who deems me an angel; Reviews=Feelings of Epicness. Feelings of Epicness=Inspiration).\*\*

. . .

\_Emma\_

As the sun slowly poured it's dreadful sunshine into my old room, I hid, completely wrapped up in covers, hoping today would be a day of sleeping eternity away. Today would be far, far, from that. With a stir, I realize I must have fallen asleep at Mum's last night, cause I'm wrapped up tightly in my old bed.

And then, so suddenly, my phone starts beeping like a fairy on acid. It forces me out of my fantasies of sleep, and I reach for it and flip it into call. "Hello?"

"You need to come over here right now." It's Rikki. Her voice is shockingly serious and full of displeased vibes. I sit up in bed, and instantly start to worry. What has happened?

"Why, what's going on?" My voice asks, hoping it's as frivolous as Rikki getting in trouble by her uptight roommate for bringing Zane into their dorm.

"I just got off the phone with Cleo." Rikki is silent, and then finally blurts it out. "Ash and Bella hooked up last night."

My mouth is flawed into disbelieving silence as I quickly hang up the phone, get dressed, scurry over to Rikki's house hear my heart's doom.

. . .

I am trying so desperately to hide my tears and their will as I am being held in friendship comfort by Rikki and Cleo, as we sit in the back deck area of Rikki's old house.

"How long were they in there for?" My voice startles a sob. My heart screeches: How could Ash do this to me? How could Bella be such a backstabbing bitchy whore? How could my life just start to fall apart like this?

Cleo gulps, and answers, being the main witness. "Forty-five minutes." She says gently. "They tried to act like nothing happened when they came out together."

Another tear fell, and I started to blame myself. "If I had just gone with you to that party instead of that stupid dinner" I shook my head, starting to brew a pot of self-hatred. Luckily, Rikki stopped me.

"Ohmygod, Emma! This is not your fault!" She screeched, and I tried to believe her. She rolled her eyes, and offered me a tissue. I took it. She went on, "You shouldn't have to babysit your boyfriend." She stated, with pity gleaming in her eyes.

Cleo nodded, and offered her shoulder to cry on. "Yeah, especially after handling long distance, and then working out when you two met up here again." She added.

Rikki grunted, "Supposedly." I looked at the yellow grass.

"I just can't believe it." I say, doubt evident in my voice. I never thought this would happen to me, with Ash, of all guys. I lean my head on Cleo's shoulder while Rikki bites her lip. An idea springs up in her.

"Hey, you know what would help you forget about that loser?" Rikki asks, eyes offering me some hope.

"What? Taking that gun your dad has and shooting Ash in the you-know-what?" I reply, feigning a joke, although my mind is too low to really care. I hear Cleo laugh, and for a moment, my day brightens. I still have my friends. Rikki and Cleo chose me. They realize how terrible Bella is, even after being friends with her for a year. They will stand by me, and not her. It gives me comfort.

"No." Rikki smirks, and unveils a flask of alcohol with a brave grin. "This." Rikki relaxes her feet, lying them over the hammock's end in her back house's area.

"Rikki-" I start to disapprove, but she opens it up and hands it to me anyway. I take a deep sniff of the stuff, and almost gag. "Ugh,

this stuff stinks, and what if your dad walks out on us?" I ask, realism coming through.

Rikki grabs it back, giggles, and takes a long sip of the liquid-drug. "So, what if he does?" She snickers, which is followed by Cleo giving in and laughing, so I respond to just go with the only people on my side, and try to forget about all the crap plugging up my life.

Soon enough, we are walking in Rikki's house-trailer for a pleading-fifty-dollars Rikki thinks she can somehow concur up so we can enjoy today in girly happiness.

"Hey, Mr. Chadwick." Cleo and I sprout happy greetings, and he smiles at both of us and returns the greeting.

"Hey, Dad." Rikki whips up a white-plastic innocent smile. "Can I borrow fifty dollars?" She shines a please-let-me-get-what-I-want smile, as Cleo and I watch some boys motor their boat by in the view of their kitchen's window shows on the ocean, completely staying out of it.

His smile crinkles, and he sighs. "What, what do you need fifty dollars for?" His eyebrows are baffled, and wrinkles come across his face.

Rikki sighs, like it should be obvious. "I want to have some fun with my friends, dad." Her eyes flicker at him, in that innocent baby-blueness that can turn from innocent to fiery at any given moment. But, right now, they're convincing little suckers.

Slowly, Rikki's dad gulps, and pulls his wallet out to hold up fifty pure Australian dollars. Rikki smiles, glad she's gotten her way, and says, "That's okay. You can just leave it on the counter. Thanks, dad."

Mr. Chadwick does leave the money on the counter, and I watch as Rikki grabs it and places it in her pocket. She turns to Cleo and I, smiles wide, and points to the ocean. We leave the house, and Rikki whispers, "Race to Mako."

Our bodies plunge into the water, as I, brilliantly as ever, beat Rikki to the moon pool, where we converse a sisterhood-bonding discussion.

"All he could talk about yesterday was how he couldn't wait to be with me." I scoff, venom lacing my emotions yet again, as I rest my head on the moon pool's stone circling.

Cleo sneers, with understanding. "Most guys will say anything to get what they want." She spouts, and shakes her head at me, apologetically.

"Tell me about it." I reply, wishing I could watch Ash and Bella be violently tortured by our mermaid powers. Not, really, of course. My mind goes violent at my next thought, "He even sent me a text message on the way to the party saying he loved me." I shake my head, at my foolishness.

"I mean, what a dog." My voice wretches.

"Total dog." Cleo agrees, and sighs with a poor-Emma pity note. But I don't really care. Weirdly, Rikki is silent before she reveals a brilliant thought.

"You know what? You should let him know that you know what a total jack-ass he is." Rikki states, with a darkening of her eyes.

I stare at her pale skin, and start thinking. "Well, he's probably out horseback riding with his cousin or something." I spit out, wishing I didn't have to have this hatred for him.

"Then leave him a message." Rikki replies, referring to the volcano's ground part of the cove, then signaling her hand, with a smile. "You can't just let him get away with this."

There's a moment of silence before I reply. "You really think I should?"

"Yeah! Tell him off!" Cleo nods, seemingly thrilled at the idea of making a boy embarrassed, which, of course, since Cleo is so sweet, she could never do to Lewis.

I gulp, and nod, relaxing into the idea. I pull myself on to Mako's volcano floor, and allow Rikki to dry me up so I can take out my phone and make a bitchy message out of the day. I was glad to realize Mako's volcano cove was the only place I received signal.

I dial number 4 on my speed dial (which I am going to change very, very soon), and wait for his retarded, "Hey-It's-Ash-I'll-Call-You-Back" speech. Ash was currently, just as I said, riding horses with his cousin. But, with what I knew, he could have been fucking Bella again, and not even thinking about me.

I look back at Cleo and Rikki for assurance, and they excitedly nod, with a giggle or two. I plan my bitch-performance. Finally, the phone beeps.

"You lying piece of crap!" I hear Rikki and Cleo hide their cackles. "Did you really think I wasn't going to find out? Well, let me tell you something. If you thought I was just going to sit back and let you bang that skank, you're wrong." I pause, and let Rikki and Cleo nod their giggles as an applause at my performance.

"Everybody's going to find out what a creep you are, and you're finally going to find out what a bitch I can be! You, and Bella, both are going to get what's coming to you!" I finish, and snap my phone shut, before I take a deep breath of relief. It's over. I have told Ash that we are doneâ€|although I still have a burning whole in my heart, it'sâ€|okay. I am breathing.

"Whoa! You tell him, girl." Cleo woots in support, as Rikki smirks an incredible you-win smile. Slowly, I let myself smile and nod in agreement.

"He's probably going to die anyway with all the nasty diseases Bella's got." Rikki comments, and I give her a brooding tell-me-more look. She answers it by saying, "Bella cheated on her old boyfriend, Will." Rikki says, before a moment of silence. "Who knows who else

she's done things withâ€|"

"Yuck." Cleo trails along with Rikki, unaware she's holding an afraid troubled face on her innocent brown-eye mask.

"No kidding." I comment, and shiver, trying to get the image of Ash and Bella out of my head, for good. "I can't believe you were ever friends with her." I say, shaking my head full of repulse.

Rikki sighs, and bites her lip. "Yeah, well, she used to be cool." Cleo sadly nods along with Rikki. "Before Bella started only hanging out with Will, or well, probably all the other guys that little whore seduced." Rikki said with a vomit-face, and eyes that were closing in with determination.

"I think she got jealous of us, and our friendship with you," Cleo smiles sadly at me. "That's why she hooked up with Ash." Cleo says, as if offering Bella an excuse will change anything.

"What do you mean?" I ask, wondering how a mermaid friendship could be ruined all by jealousy. I sure know my friendship with Cleo and Rikki would never be that fragile. I just can't understand how they were even friends with Bella. She was such a stupid backstabbing tramp.

Cleo bites her lips, and her eyes search the sand around us for a reply. "You know how girls like that are. If she can get what you haveâ€|she'll think she's better than you." Cleo says, with vibe of insincerity. "Which, she's not, of course." Cleo adds, and offers me a we're-unbreakable-besties smile, and then eyes Rikki.

Rikki snorts, and continues the conversation. "Yeah, but it's not just Emma. Bella thinks she's better than all of us." Rikki's eyes trail a story, and then she seems to sift back into reality. "But, by messing with you, she's messing with us too." Rikki says with a superior unsatisfied grin. Cleo, awkwardly, nods, obsessively.

I stare at them both, letting all of this sink in, as my eyes follow the opening of the volcano up into the sky, where the sun is shining happily. I knew Cleo, Rikki, and I's mermaidness bond was amazing and pure. But, something was writhing inside of me that it shouldn't have been this easy for them to hate on Bella (which she very much needed), when they had been best friends with her just three days ago. I couldn't believe the bitch shared the secret of our mermaid identity. She was a total Charlotteâ€|that needed to be ridded.

Rikki's eyes sparkled as a devious idea glittered within her, as she sprang an incredible smile. "Ooh, you know what we should do?"

"What?" Cleo and I cry, fascinated as ever by Rikki's glint of teenage evil in her blue eyes.

"Teach Bella a lesson." Rikki replied with a sneer, with a sickeningly scary smile. I misread this as a teenage prank, that would cause absolutely no harmâ€| which I would believe, at first.

"Oh!" Cleo replied, then added a childish giggle of, "Like pour sugar

in her gas tank or something?"

"Um, that doesn't even work by the way." I say, with my annoying all-knowing Emma voice.

"Yes! It does." Cleo says, trying to convince me.

"No, it does not!" I reply, knowing I am right since I read a book about fake pranks that don't work.

Cleo just shakes her head, and edges me to agree with her. "Really, it totally does!"

"Guys, guysâ€¦ Forget the sugar. I mean a real lesson." We are silenced by Rikki's thundering announcement. Then slowly, the idea of Bella surrendering to my greatness starts to appear very, very appealing.

While, Rikki glares at Cleo expectantly, Cleo wobbles her lip and finally nods. "I'm in." Now they turn to me, batting their eyelashes because they know, of course, I will say yes. But, secretly, I start to wonder. I've never given anyone a 'lesson' in my entire lifeâ€¦but, Bella does deserve itâ€¦

Finally, I smirk. "Me too." Rikki grips both our hands, and smiles a smirk of revengeful delight. I bask in it, as we all erupt in plotting giggles.

We are the original, or, well, perhaps second original mermaids. Nobody messes with us. It's way too obvious that ice, air, and fire combined eliminate the soggy slutty jelly all too easily.

. . .

\_Rikki\_

Within the next few moments of us floating together in friendship at Mako, we crafted our plot of revenge. It was all so terrifyingly mean, and I couldn't wait to see Bella's betrayed lost face scolded by the tearsâ€¦that Emma, Cleo, and I would cause.

Now, of course, we had to allow Bella to trust us. This was going to be the hardest battle, I realize, as Cleo parks her car in front of Bella's dorm building. I tell Cleo to wait here, while I do the more sophisticated parts of the plan, and she, dutifully, listens. I ignore her idiotic hiding-trouble face, and knock on Bella and her roomie's door. I smile and look back at Cleo, who's chewing on her hair. Ugh, she is so annoying at times. Too scared. Never willing to be daring and rebellious.

Perhaps, I'm the one who wants to teach Bella a lesson most of all. Truth be told, a hidden desire did pummel through my veins, and I did have a naughty secret. And Bella had always been in the way of it. It wasn't until Bella walked in on Will and I, that I knew Cleo and I would be forced to drop her. So, we had. Maybe, I wouldn't have if I had known Bella hadn't seen my face when Will and I were in the middle of our fun little games. But, I still hated her at times. Just as I did with Zane, at times. They didn't understand anything, but Will did. And, Bella, was so stupidly a prison wall that happened to come between us.

Perfectly, Bella opens her door with a practiced smile. She's holding a magazine and her iPod. Immediately when she sees me, her eyes flame to sadness when she remembers we're not friends anymore, and I'm probably just here to humiliate or sadden her. Haha, is she in for an adventure.

"Hey, Rikki." Bella gulps, and tries a wavering smile of hope. She still believes that I could possibly let her back in our group. Doesn't she know she fucked Ash, the old new member of our mermaid club's boyfriend?

"Oh, hey! Uh, sorry to just drop by like this, but, I, sadly don't have your number anymore." I sigh, with a scowl, and continue.

"It's fine." Bella states, unsure. "What's up?" She asks, hoping I will invite her to some sort of forgiving slumber party. Bella eyes Cleo, with a smile, knowing Cleo is naturally the weakest, and most forgiving.

"Well, actually, there's this amazing college bash! It's at some secluded water house in the ocean." I aim at her my own practiced smile, and start babbling, as if we're still best friends.

"Any frat guys?" Bella asks, happiness staining her complexion and voice.

"Tons. Yeah, these are the hottest frat guys ever! And we've been invited." I refer to Cleo, and stare at her with shining hopeful blue eyes. They feign hope that she'll join us so we can have a blast together. The truth is they hold hope she'll join us so we can humiliate her.

"Yeah, we're mermaids and all, but I can totally dry us while we climb up to the water house. It's gonna be awesome! You have to come!" I say, excitement ravished in my voice.

Bella bites her lip, and examines my face, wondering if I'm being truthful. I bat eyes of total baby blue eyed innocence, like a doe.

"Frat guys? That could be a good distraction from Willâ€¦" She mumbles, and I nod enthusiastically. Inside, my head is screeching: YOU LITTLE BITCH! WILL SHOULDN'T HAVE LOVED YOU! ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS FINDING YOUR NEXT CONQUEST! WHORE, WHORE, YOU'RE A WHORE!

But, I just gulp and spout, "Totally!"

She attempts at a giggle, until her eyes dim the bright light that just two moments ago used to be in her. She sighs, and quietly asks, "Is Emma going?"

Seems like someone knew who Ash was after all. Or just found out in her next-day hangover.

"No. I think she's doing something with her mum." I handle this maturely, so un-Rikki styled, I see through my own self. But Bella doesn't.

Bella nods, and starts to think, looking back at her magazine.

"You're going right now?"

I laugh, and shriek an obvious "Uh, yeah! Free food! Free beer! Frat guys! So, go get changed and we'll go!" I say, a command, waiting her to squeal an obedient I'll-do-anything-to-be-your-friend-again yes.

Bella looks like she's about to give in, before she sighs. "I don't know. I'm supposed to be rewriting my Simpson essay." She chides her teeth in pity of herself.

"Professor Simpson is such a dog." I state blatantly, and continue. "You know, he doesn't even accept rewritten essays. You know what you should do? You should send him a picture of you with a frat boy, send it, and tell him you know he's jealous!" I bite my lip, and offer my infamous wit.

"Hmmmâ€|Yeah." Bella says, still unsure.

"So, what's the big deal?" I ask, hiding the annoyance triggered. She should just say yes already, and make this quicker and less humiliating for herself. "We're only gonna go for a few hours." I assure her, when she still doesn't give me a complete answer, I continue. "Oh, come on! How often do we get invited to a frat party!" I shriek, knowing the correct answer is never. We are not sorority girls. "Be spontaneous, Bella! Come on!" I exclaim, at my wit's end.

And, finally, Bella caves. "Okay!" She blushes, as if her and I being friends again is too good to be true. Smart girl, ha. "Just, let me change real quick." She claims, and then runs back into her dorm room to find a dazzling starry dress that screams I'm-head-bitch-in-the-room.

"Okay, hurry up! Get a move on!" I shout, making our trip seem more believable.

"I'll do my make-up when we get there." Bella assures me, as I watch her scramble in sparkly dresses as they flail within the air.

I nod and smile. This is going to be so much wicked fun. I turn back to Cleo, with a deliciously evil smile. She greets it with a hesitant thumbs up. Time for the wicked plot to begin.

. . .

Soon enough, Cleo, Bella, and I are racing through the ocean's waters, as I, playing evil mistress, lead her to where, supposedly, this amazing party will take place. Really though, we are just sneaking in strides the long way around Mako Island, and into it's magically enchanting moon pool, and volcano cove. Where I have the plan set up exactly as I like it.

After swimming for a while, Bella points to the ocean's surface above, and Cleo and I glide to the top, ready to meet Bella's disbelieving unsure ray of green eyes.

"So," Cleo plays along, keeping eye-contact with me only. "You think we'll be the only non-sorority girls at the party?"

"I hope not! I want witnesses." I exclaim, with a wink and a sigh to Cleo as I notice Bella's wandering smile. Cleo meets my giggle, and forces her own.

"This is going to be so much fun, I can't wait!" I start again, hoping Bella will add in something, which will all so wretchedly add in to my wicked plans' delight. "Zane tells me these guys throw the best parties." I state, with a sneer.

Bella twitches a smile, then adds. "As long as I'm back by ten." Cleo agrees instantly. "You won't stay later than that, will you?" Bella asks me, assuming I'm much more of a devious party-goer than Cleo is.

"No, we won't stay long at all." I give Bella a fake form of comfort, and she smiles at Cleo and I, full of happiness and forgiveness. As if she should be the one thinking about forgiveness.

Soon enough, Bella, Cleo, and I dive back into the murky waters of the ocean in winter time. We glide along with the dolphins for a while, and I feel even they give me a smirking face of approval. Bella will definitely get what she deserves tonight.

As I point Bella, with Cleo trailing along side me to the opening of the Mako's moon pool, I see a confused face come upon Bella's mask. Then she, immediately assumes we're just stopping here for a break, and glides in with us.

We take deep breathes as we look up at the volcano's opening, ready for spooky and magical and legendary nights that all mark a mermaid's life in each important way.

"I thought we were going straight to the ocean houseâ€¦How far out is this party anyway?" Bella asks, starting to question Cleo and I's motives to take her out here, when we hadn't exactly been on speaking terms.

"It's just a little while from Makoâ€¦" Cleo guts in, to save some time before we watch Bella have a fitful breakdown where she realizes exactly what she is. A pathetic little bitch who doesn't deserve Will.

"Well, I told you it was out in the middle of the ocean! It's like this old water house, that's perfect for a frat party. In fact, it's right around the bend of Mako." I state, blatantly, finding Bella's menace making this plan more difficult by each second. Bella, meanwhile, is wondering if water houses are even real. My thoughts are very different. Where was Emma? She was supposed to already be here.

"Yeah. We're just stopping here so we don't show up fashionably early." Cleo gulps, with a smile that soaks up the excitement in the moon pool. If Emma screws this upâ€¦

Suddenly, water sloshes upon us, and an eerily beautiful and bitchy looking Emma Gilbert rises over the water, with a smirking passionately pissed off expression.

Bella nearly chokes. "Waitâ€¦What is this? Why is Emma here?" Bella asks, fear slowly doing cradles in her eyes. When no one answers her

except with menacing stares, she shrieks again, "What is she doing here?"

"Take a wild guess, Bella." Cleo mumbles, and I am glad to say I found pride in how, so quickly, so much emotion was drained from Cleo's face. Soon enough, she looked like a numb evil bitch in order to make this pathetic wannabe-mermaid pay. Just like the rest of us.

Bella starts to hide in the corner of the moon pool, as she takes deep breathes. Emma, Cleo, and I stand as a block way in front of the moon pool's exit. We plan to trap darling Bella.

"Scared, Bella?" I smirk, and giggle, having eerie rises of sadistic glee in how much I enjoy seeing her near fearful fright.

When Bella takes deep gazes into each of our eyes, tingling realization takes a toll over her face. There was no party. We took her out here to her doom, her humiliating doom.

"What the hell is going on?" Bella whimpers a shriek.

I stop her. "Shut up! It's Emma's turn to talk."

Emma glides near her, blue eyes intensified, blood red lips curling, anger deeply furrowed within her soul. This could be very, very fun. Bella just shivers in fear. Delightful fear.

"You know, I have never been anything but nice to you-" Emma starts, with penetrating eyes, as I'm sure she mentally pounds tons of real mermaid fist into Bella's pretty little green eyes.

Bella suddenly shocks all of us. "So what!" Her voice curls of her own hidden anger that her plastic little mask of makeup has clearly been hiding.

"So, you go after my boyfriend!" Emma finally shrieks, losing control of her steady perfect good girl image. She doesn't seem to care, and I'm enjoying every moment of both Bella and Emma losing control of everything they've ever known.

"Actually, your boyfriend came on to me." Bella slurs with slyness. My own anger for Bella intensifies. Why does that little bitch think she can have any guy she wants?

"That's a lie." Emma states, and I feel pity come upon my senses for her. She is supposed to be showing Bella off, but by each moment, Bella is gaining a tiny grain of control Emma once had. Girls need controls, especially mermaids, because there are so many things that we can't control.

"You know what else?" Bella's voice cracks. A momentum of me knows Bella isn't used to being this mean. It's unwritten from her DNA, but she's good at acting. I can see that. She will do anything so that Emma, Cleo, and I won't humiliate her. But, we will. We definitely will. "He told me that you were a virgin when you two got together."

Emma's face splits. This is personal. Too personal.

"And, he had to teach you everything." Bella continues, with a smile that believes she will win this mermaid battle. "Let's just say, I taught Ash a few things even he didn't know. The sad truth is, Emma, I'm always going to be the girl that guys whistle at, and desire, and you're always going to be boring old predictable Emma. No excitement. Nothing but controlling bitchiness that no one likes. So, don't be surprised if Ash comes back for more."

I want to hiss at her, burn Bella all up, and watch the fire take her away. But, I just watch as Emma's eyes fill up, trying to hide the steaming leaks her eyes will eventually give way to.

"You're such a whore!" Emma shouts, her own instincts telling her Bella needs a much harsher lesson than being abandoned and trapped in the moon pool after being humiliated by her ex-best friends. And, maybe she does.

"What're you gonna do?" Bella shrieks, asking all of us. "Clog me? Huh? Go ahead, let's see what happens next." Was that goody two shoe Bella actually initiating a fight? I gasp, but know what must be done.

"Hit her, Emma!" I exclaim, and as Emma gets influenced by Bella's unexpected glare, my shout, and Cleo's excessive nodding, Emma, for once in her life, leaks under pressure.

What happens next is enough for gasps to fill up the entire Mako Island of silence. It's stunning. Bella has just punched Emma. Emma sinks underwater for a few moments, until quickly, she floats up with a vengeful stare on her face, and a slash of blood on the corner of her head. Remains of Bella's petty sharp nails.

"You're such a bitch!" Emma screeches into the air, before shoving Bella completely under the water.

Cleo and I laugh, our giggles multiplying as Bella comes back to the surface after Emma released her. Bella's eyes are in full shock. She can't contemplate what just happened. And, she doesn't know, if I'm in charge, she's definitely in for more.

As Emma, Cleo, and I hover over her, I chuckle in an evil spirit, "Aw, looks like you're outnumbered." My smirk shines deviously into her fear-torn eyes. It's a beautiful thing to be able to make someone so scared, so small, to feel as if their life is so fragile in your hands.

"Poor Bella." Cleo comments, icy eyes corrupting her usually innocent state of mind. That is also a beautiful thing, to watch someone float so easily from innocent to a darker side of life.

"It's gonna be a long troubling way back. Hope you have fun." Emma says, with a sly creature taking hold of her. She's speaking of how Cleo, her, and I will swim and leave Bella in her state of despair, and then freeze a wall of water (using both Emma and Cleo's fishy powers) to trap Bella inside the moon pool. Unless she chooses to walk over the long tricky jungles of the islands, which she will delightfully be blessed be our booty traps.

"Goodbye." Emma squeezes Cleo and I's arms, in some form of a thank-you for being on my side, as she slips underneath the water,

and back into the ocean, where she will wait for Cleo and I to help her build the frozen wall that will trap Bella, into a misery-filled time where Bella will be forced to think about all the wrong she has done. Keeping me from Will, among the things.

"What does she mean it's going to be a troubling way back? I can just swim." Bella whimpers. Cackles escape Cleo and I's mouths.

"What do you think it means, Bella? We're not letting you out of here easily. You'll be forced to think of all of your wrongdoings." Cleo and I riddle with Bella's fearful mind.

"I thought you were my friends!" Bella shrieks, as tears now smear down her cheeks, and I just smirk in cruel brilliancy. She honestly doesn't see how easy it was for us to ditch her. How easy it was for me to thrill Will. But how uneasy it was for me to pry Will to dump Bella's whiny ass, so he could be mine. That's why Bella needed to pay. She needed to pay for the way she forced Will to belong with her. He could never just tell me he loved me and not her. He couldn't even say he loved me more than her. That was why she was done. I had known this for a while, once I had stolen Will from her tale, she would be completely done.

"We're done with you. We never wanted a friend like you. You know, pathetic, a slut, a bitch, sad, and weak. Well, let's just say, we're not hanging around with trash anymore." I twist my words to see pain glowing in Bella's eyes, a look very much for her.

"That's right." Cleo agrees.

"And, of course, you can't tell anyone about what happened here, because, in doing so, you would tell them about our little secret, one we're disgusted to still have to share with you. You wouldn't want that." I twitch an evil grin that has been being crafted my whole life, and just now, decides to come out and shine.

"Not to mention, we'd make your life a living hell." Cleo pleasantly surprises me with her threat. An evil version of Cleo makes herself very appealing. An evil version of everyone creates a much more charming world, but, of course, some inferior weaklings must be served as lowly victims. Like evil witches named Bella.

"You can't just trap me in here!" Bella says, begging starting to seem within her voice. But, we're not taking it. For a long time now, she has deserved this. She's finally getting what she rightfully deserves. All is fair in the world now.

"Watch us." I raise my eyebrow, and right as I'm about to take Cleo's hand to sink under, and officially trap Bella, she starts ranting in a beggars' form.

"Okay, listen! I'm sorry!" She wills to find some friendship quality inside us. But, what she doesn't know is, that I never wanted to be friends with her.

"You should have thought about that before you slept with Will, and Ash, and well, who knows who else?" I sneer, with a disapproving shake of my head.

"Oh, don't worry, Bella. There's a water police station a little

while farther. I'm sure they'll let you use their radio to call your mummy." Cleo disguises as sarcasm, but deep down, I am wondering why Cleo is giving away this information. It's not like the water police could even see Bella in the ocean anyway.

As Cleo and I turn, with devilish giggles to swim far away and leave Bella to her doom, I feel a gust of glob take form in my hair. Jelly. Jelly is covering all of my hair. An uncontrolled angered scowl turns and faces Bella, as chunks and chunks of jelly come spiraling from my hair as Bella twists her hand this way and that, her one last resort of control.

My emotions tumble in sociopathic glory. "You think you're better than me!" I shriek, as I glide over to her, and pin her against the volcanic wall. I pinch her neck against it. "You think you're better than me! You think Will loved you!"

"Get off!" Bella screeches, as my hands of fury make it harder and harder for her to have a safe breathing zone. I don't want her to have a safe breathing zone. I want her to pay. That is all I know.

"Where is Will now! Where is he!" I feel Cleo's presence watch in horror as I pummel Bella. All Bella does is screech the same thing: "Get off! Let go! Please!"

Finally, Cleo does her own screeching. "Rikki, stop it!"

But, I don't hear her. All I hear is my anger for Bella. How Will chose her. How she thinks all guys should hail her. How she stole Ash. How she deserves pain.

"Bitch! Bitch! Bitch!" I screech, now tears running out of my eyes, getting blurred in with the repulsive jelly.

Bella's crying as well, "Let go! Let go!" And for a moment, we are two struggling monsters, in the middle of chaotic meltdowns, absorbed in magic, just floating in life's mysteryâ€|untilâ€|the heat.

"I HATE YOU!" I screech, and with that, with a lash of insanity, all loss of reason, my hand widens and slowly starts to curl down into an angry fist, one the revolts of energy I depict as fire and lightning. I will fire upon Bella.

With a displeased look, I watched as Bella's face quickly reddened, and she stopped her screeches. Now, all I heard was Cleo crying. Bella's face became a flame, and I saw her disgusting beauty get twisted away into ugly fiery angerâ€|my angerâ€|that wasâ€|killing her. I was killing her! My hand zapped down as I realized the horrid fate that was happening within the entity of my life.

I take deep breathes, trying to maintain calmness. I only felt for that one pure second that control was all mine, now I watch an unconscious burned body and face of Bella Hartley. Cleo's sputtering.

"Ohmygod. Ohmygod." Cleo gulps, having her own troubled breathing. "Look at her eyes I think she'sâ€|" Her eyes smoldered off, the fire, my fire, got the best of them.

"She's fine." I try to convince Cleo and myself to believe. It's only real if you believe it is. "She's just faking it." I will it to be true. I swat at Bella's hand, "Come on, Bella. Stop being a bitch and get up!"

"Stop." Cleo finally demands, and gently feels Bella's lulling neck and stares with a face of dread. Cleo is listening for a heartbeat. I count the seconds that go by. "She's not breathing." Cleo states, and her brown eyes pale into the frozen arctic.

I gulp, and stare at the water, horror filling my mind. I killed Bella? Everything's distorted. No, no, this wasn't supposed to happen. She's not dead. She can't be. It wasn't the plan.

"Bella?" I tap her shoulder. "Bella?" Suddenly, my voice is pulled into desperate begs. "Get up. Get up! Bella? Bella! Get up! Get up! Get UP! BELLA! BELLA, GET UP!" I screech at her, sob-hiccups finding their way into my usually tough exterior. Tears are coming in buckets now. Cleo is shaking her head and pacing around in the water. Emma must still be waiting for us to come and help her freeze the wall.

But, suddenly, everything is in black and white, slow moments pass. I watch Bella's head crumble in a lull upon Mako's moon pool ground. I watch in blurry tears as Cleo starts to pull herself up onto the ground, where she looks at me expectantly.

"Rikki! Dry me off!" She shrieks, her own voice nearing the sob hiccups.

"What are you doing?" I ask, horrified.

"You have to dry me off so I can call an ambulance!" Cleo shrieks, her voice wreaking intelligent obviousness. But, she is so, so stupid. This is a fiery mess. I'll go to jail. My life will be ruined. This can't happen. I won't let it.

"ARE YOU CRAZY?" I sputter, as I feel doses of my weaknesses spilling out. Snot is pouring its way from my nose to my face.

Cleo looks at me with full gutted horror, and a touch of fear. "Someone has to help her! We have to help her!" Cleo starts shouting, but the truth of the matter is that what is done is done. We can't do anything now except ruin our own lives.

"We can't!" I shriek. "They'll find out our secret! They'll find out that I..." I couldn't finish the statement. "Just give me a minute. Just give me a minute." I repeat, agonizing my mind for old Rikki's clever ways that got her out of almost anything. But not this. The only way to get out of this was to be pure evil.

And that was exactly what I was going to do.

A few moments later, I was coaxing my new plot into Cleo's dishevel mind. "Do you want to go to jail? Do you want to be put in a fish tank? Is that what you want?" Cleo shakes her head, messes of snot cover both our faces.

"Cause that, is exactly what will happen if you tell anyone about

this, okay?

Cleo shakes her head in distressed confusion. "I didn't do anything." She pleads.

I can't have her think that. She has to believe that she was just as a part of this as I was. She has to believe she's guilty, so guilty that if anyone finds out about this, our lives are doomed.

"Yes, you did." I will my charming convincing ways to shine even in tragedy. "You swam out here with me. You knew what the plan was. You're just as much a part of this." I state.

"We did not plan to hurt her!" Cleo shouts, willing this to be as innocent and easy We-Call-911-And-They=Save-Her as her naïve little mind wants to believe.

"The cops won't see it that way." I claim, eerily, as complete and utter horror and disgust form within Cleo's eyes. Her old eyes of brown beauty and innocence is completely gone. Dark eyes filled with pain, sorrow, and regret take the place of them. "We will both be in trouble."

When Cleo has her outburst of tears, I gulp in sadness, and take her forward within a hug. We sob into each other's arms. "It'll be okay." I whisper. I'm forcing both her and my own self to believe this. As we sob, I note Bella's body, and develop a hiding space for it. No one will find it out here at Mako. But, Emma can't find it—so, the best space would be right near the opening of the jungle's entrance into the moon pool.

"Nobody knows that we're here. No one will find her. Bella didn't tell anyone where she was going—we all didn't." Somehow, I feel Cleo become even more distressed at these words, as she just shakes her head of sobs.

"But, what about Emma?" Cleo whispers.

"Let me handle her." I reply, goose bumps taking control of my arms as I plan to keep this a secret from Emma. "You just can't tell anybody about what happened here, okay?" Finally, and with a bit of reluctance, Cleo nods agreement, and replies, "Okay."

"Promise me?" came my now very cold voice.

"I promise." was the slice of the beginning of Cleo and I's oath to keep this deadly secret, just like all others, to our graves.

Soon enough, I started to take hold of Bella's lifeless torso, and eyed Cleo, waiting for her, on the ground part of the moon pool, to drag Bella's tail up on the volcanic rock.

"Help me move her." I order, and Cleo's eyes once again fill with absolute horror and anguish.

"What?" Cleo asks, meekly.

"We can't just leave her here for Emma to find, can we?" I shudder, with urgency in my voice, knowing that Emma won't wait forever in the ocean forever. "Come on!"

Cleo looks like she's about to say no, until a slight creeping fear shadows her eyes as she stares into my expectant rays. Doesn't she realize how terrible Bella was of a person? Anyways, we had never planned to kill her. This, all of it, was a brutal, brutal accident. The police wouldn't see it that way, so we had to hide it. That was all.

Soon enough, Cleo and I push Bella's lifeless eerily beautiful mermaid body onto the ground. I dry Bella, myself, and then Cleo off. As a blurry half moon passes over head the moon pool's volcano opening, Cleo and I carry Bella, in a pretty purple sparkly dress into the tunnel that leads to the moon pool. As we drag her, her blue Mako crystal necklace plummets to the ground. I watch it thud with an emotionless stare. After placing Bella in her spot, I take the necklace into my own pocket, with my fifty dollars. I should hold on to this last part of Bella, even if she was horrid. I decide we might move Bella's body at a different time, but I could just imagine Emma swimming in on the horror that was unleashed andâ€¦doom. Despair. Wretchedness.

Cleo and I told Emma that we left Bella, exactly as Emma had last seen her, humiliated and a bit freaked. But not harmed. We created a frozen wall that had been meant to trap Bella, and then as Cleo and I swam into the ocean, with Emma by our side, we let the ocean's salty sting wash away our tearsâ€¦ When we returned to our former livesâ€¦we would pretend this arrangement never happened. I had forced Cleo to promise that.

And now, I made a promise to myself that I would never let anyone else ever know that Rikki Chadwickâ€¦hadâ€¦murderedâ€¦Bella Hartley.

\*\*A/N: A very intense dramatic chapter! Probably one of the most important in this seriesâ€¦ Now, don't try to mentally tell the computer screen that you have absolutely zero thoughts on that wickedly messed up of an event where a mermaid killed another mermaid, her own ex-best friend. If, of course, you feel no need to reviewâ€¦ Well, clearly, some people have much more dull it's-painful-to-think minds than I thought. The sad truth is only 3 readers out of the 62 visitors/readers felt the beautiful quick sensation of giving another writer feedback? Remember, every review, long or short, praising or flaming, concise or rambling, counts. Reviews equal inspiration, and if you are a writer, I'm sure you know how inspiration is a writer's best friend (next to creativity). So do all writer's a favor, and review! Speak of the secrets and lies that might follow this chapter, and the messed up soul who murdered Bella Hartley, and of all the ideas in-between. x)  
-oftaleslonglostofinnocence\*\*\_

### 3. The Messed Up Aftermath Of Lies

**\*\*Mermaid Turned Monster\*\***

Written By **\*\*OfTalesLongLostOfInnocence\*\***

\*\*A/N: Woohoo! Another charming messed up chapter has been found by those amazing eyes that absorb all the clever information you hold, congratulations. This is an aftermath-type episode of Bella's

death/murder/disappearance. Enjoy, darling Chinese flaming cat lover angels. Do not forget to pour your soul's extent of thought into a review.\*\*\_

. . .

\_Emma\_

I waited for a mighty long while for Cleo and Rikki to swim and follow me out, leaving Bella to her lonely humiliation. Two times, I almost swam back into the moon pool and demanded why their own little goodbyes were taking so long. I had kind of wanted to have the last word with Bella. But, slowly and surely, Cleo and Rikki swam out, and with a crafty smile, Cleo and I created the wall of ice that locked Bella into Mako, the place where it was so obvious she didn't belong.

We swam to the shores of Australian inland, and I left at giggling goodbyes with Rikki, and awkward tensions with Cleo. What was that about? She did realize Bella deserved all that we did to her, didn't she? As I trailed along the beach, I felt slow agonizing pain squeeze my head, at it's corner.

I reach and felt some numb spot filled with liquid. I take my hand from the corner of my head too see it's blood. My blood. From when Bella hit me. That bitch, who knew she had such a good hitting hand? Who did she think she was hitting me when I did nothing to her, except arrange this little plan with Rikki and Cleo?

I sigh, as I realize I should buy some washing wipes and put some antiseptic cream. I locate the nearest beach-bum store, find the antiseptic creams and wipes, buy them, and plan my the end of this day as a relaxing night of watching a marathon of I=Hate-Men movies with my roommate, Leila.

I planned to leave this night to today, and long forget the wretchedness Ash did upon me, how Bella betrayed the mermaid code, if we had had one. And I planned to eat a lot of chocolate.

. . .

I raced into mum's house, hopeful that I could grab my remaining clothes that I scattered in my old room, and ditch the place, ready for my chocolate-and-hatred-of-men-and-sluts special. But, of course, mum made it much more difficult than that for me to slip pass her radar. She was acting like I was still in High School.

"Emmaâ€¦" Mum gave a tweaked hopeful smile. "Hey, honey." Please tell me she wasn't trying to bond, and forget all about the event that happened last night? Or maybe she wanted me to apologize to Thomasâ€¦Ugh. "Emma, would you sit down? I think we need to talk." I gulp. She's in her I-mean-business tone. She couldn't possibly know any of my secrets, could she? Of course not, I tell myself.

"I'm tired, and want to get back to my dorm, can we do it tomorrow?" I ask with a sigh, knowing the distance between Uni and my old home is a sad slim few kilos.

"Emma, please." Mum ac-hems her voice and refers to the stool in front of the counter. I roll my eyes, realizing she's not going to

let her Mum-talk go. My eyes search for Elliot to come in and start telling the boring details of his day. No distracting little brother available, unfortunately.

"You hungry? You want some of this?" Mum refers to her infamous homemade yogurt filled with the delights of fruit added with the Gilbert's own spin. Truth is, I would like some yogurt. But, I would rather head far, far away from this old house, and have my rightful cry-outs of cheating boyfriends as I sleep tonight. Then I realize something, Mum's avoiding something she wants to say.

"No." I say with a dazed expression. My mind is in another world, where I keep wondering what Bella's doing. Is she sitting there crying for the next few hours? Or is she immediately trekking through Mako, finding the booty traps we set up for her in the dark? What is Ash doing? Regretting his mistakes of losing me? Or rejoicing that he is now free to fall?

"What happened to your head?" Mum suddenly pipes in with worried mumness. I gulp. It's not like I'm going to tell her what Rikki, Cleo, and I did to Bella. She'd say I'm a mean girl, which I'm not. I'm just a very tired girl who wants to rest peacefully, and cry her heart out, the right every girl has when her boyfriend cheats on her.

I pull my blonde hair to cover the edge of my head, and shrug. "Nothing, I just slipped on some rocks." I lie, with an annoyed expression that tells her she should start boring me less.

"Well, we should put something on that." Mum cries, her anxiety only a mother should have, rising in her voice.

"Mum, I already did!" I exclaim, wishing she would just leave me and my new life at Uni alone.

Then confusion settles into Mum's eyes. She wants to know how exactly I stumbled on some 'rocks'. "Where were you this evening? Did you spend the whole day at Rikki's?"

"No, we just hung out there this morning, then we all went out to the mall." I sigh, wishing her pointed interrogation would just end. How is this any of her business anyway? I do wonder why I'm so expertly coming up with excuses on the spot.

"And, that's where you slipped on some rocks?" Mum doesn't believe me, and I now realize those two lies crafted together sound a bit ludicrous, but I act as normal as possible.

"Yes! That's what I just said," I say, my pinning know-it-all attitude coming through. "Look, I'm really tired and I have a headache, and I need to get back to the Uni campus."

Her uptight voice pierces my rambles. "Sweetie, I really need to talk to you about last night." Oh great, here comes her You-Need-To-Apologize speech. I'm sad to say, this makes me stay in my seat.

"Look, just forget everything I said. And, I'm really sorry if I hurt Thomas's feelings, okay? I'll write him an email and apologize." I state, ever the fix-up-everyone's-problems doer. Mum still looks

down, with a twitched lip.

"It's not about that. I, I want to talk about your father." Mum says, the twitch slowly coming apart to tense vibes. I raise my eyebrows, not really in the mood to talk family-problems. She takes this as permission to go on.

"Look, there are things that you would understand now, that you didn't-" Mum starts, and I shake my head, not wanting to hear some We-Lost-The-Passion speech.

"Look, can we just talk this later?" Mum completely ignores me.

"That you didn't understand when you were in High School." I squint my thudding blue eyes at her. High schoolers understand most things much more easily than others do. She was probably just being a coward.

Suddenly, my phone starts ringing it's sharp chirping beeps. I bite my lip, still glad for the distraction. Mum rings a sigh, "Please let that go to voicemail."

I gulp, and stare at Ash's capital printed name, emotions blaring from my heart. I look back at Mum, twitch my own fake smile and mumble, "I can't. It's important."

I leave the room and glide to my hideaway old room, flipping my phone with a demanding sigh, ready for tears to start gushing anger, sadness, and loss for Ash's mistake. I slam the door.

"I don't even want to talk to you right now." I spit, taking sanctuary as I lie on my dolphin bed comforter, ready to listen to his lame excuses.

"Emma, listen to me." Ash steadies to remain calm. "I got your message, I can explain." He's prying, and I don't believe him. There's no way you can explain why you cheated with a dirty ugly blonde named Isabella that tried to steal my mermaid and friendship and relationship identity.

"Explain what, Ash? That you slept with Bella last night! I don't need details!" I shriek. Part of me wills him to tell me it never happened, but I already know it has. And, I will never be a fool.

"No, no, no!" Ash exclaims. "We didn't sleep together." He pauses, looking for an excuse. He finds one. "I was super-wasted, I don't know what I was thinking."

I scoff, as the tears threaten their existence for the third time of too many times in these last two days and nights. I can't help the steaming anger that forces itself off it's tongue. "Well, you weren't too wasted to tell her I was a virgin when we first got together."

There is silence between our phone's wires, and I almost hang up. Then Ash whispers, "Emma, I don't know what to say right now except I'm sorry."

Silence thuds even louder between our phone wires. Emotions are wrecking my mind. "Yeah, well it's a little too late for that." I announce quietly to my feet, then hang up before Ash can make me believe otherwise.

Once, I'm alone in my darkened sadden room filled with so much vibrating feels, I want to just curl up into a ball, and cry. Sob, let everything out. For a moment, I just want to disappear.

. . .

\_Rikki\_

I just want to disappear. The results of Bella's death are leaving holes of guilt, that sweep in and takes my soul away. All I can feel is numbness. I know I can't have anyone find out about this. I have to craft together a plan, a story; a lie, for if things get out of hand. I have to create yet another evil plot, if things fall out of place; if things don't go my way.

I'm sitting in Dad and I's old kitchen. Even though, my house is a dump, it's better than facing my hyper and nosy roommate, Shelia ask my whereabouts. Tomorrow, I'll just tell her I was with Zane. If the time comes, I know both he, and my dad would lie for me.

Don't think like that. I scream at myself. No one is ever going to find Bella. She will just be the mysterious disappearance case that never got resolved. Cleo and I will bond closer over the loss, and Emma will never know anything about it, I lie to myself.

The house shudders in darkness as I see my dad's shadow cascade through the hallway. I sigh of relief, my stride high on anxiety. I sip at my coffee, pretending I'm just enjoying my old shit-house's presence and sneaking a midnight snack.

"Oh! Hey, sweetheart. I didn't know you were staying." Dad seems surprised, like he should be. It is strange that I am. But I can't deal with the blurry vibes of people right now. I want to be alone, and close my eyes and pretend I'm someone else, not a murderer. I said it, murderer. No, no, no. That is not what I am.

"Did you have a nice time tonight with your friends?" He questions my silence. I realize he's getting his own little stir of a midnight snack; Ben and Jerry's ice cream of some sort. And some whiskey.

I nod, my eyes vacant, too in-depth with the loss of Bella, and my soul to care. "Yeah, it was great." My tongue charms.

"Well, I'll definitely sleep better knowing your at home and safe, rather than at some berserk Uni party." Dad, attempts a joke, but it's been a long night, and it's much too dark, and late for that. I give a weak smile. Of course, I'm safe. The villains always are.

I realize Dad has taken some whiskey off down the hallway to his bedroom. We share the same love of how to indulge our problems away. He doesn't even know I stole some of his liquor, maybe he's not as good as an alcoholic as I thought. People are shit, never what they appear to be.

"Night, sweetheart."

"Kay, dad. Night." My voice shadows a response.

My eyes return to their emotion-blazon vacancy. Blurring all thoughts away, except one. I know who will have to be blamed if the Bella disaster ever does get broken. And, it won't ever be me. I take another sip of coffee, before taking one last evil look straight into the darkness of this night.

. . .

Emma

On Sunday afternoon, I was urgently texted by Cleo and Rikki to meet out on the tennis court grounds on Uni, before I met up for my annual book club. I hurried across the steps, and tipped, "Hey! What's the big secret?"

I near where they are standing with a twisted image upon them. Cleo has bags under her eyes, as if she hasn't slept these past nights. What's wrong with her? Rikki, as usual, just looks slightly pissed off.

Rikki starts the uneasy conversation. "I got a call from Bella's mum this morning." There is a queasy silence passed between all of us. "She didn't come home last night." Shock fills my veins, worry, regret—|anxiety is what forms from it all placed together.

"What?" I cry, my voice cracking. I start to wonder if our booty traps were too elaborate, or maybe Bella started hating herself so much, she decided to just stay in there and starve herself. Then we would be labeled as bullies.

"It's nothing to worry about." Rikki adds in, quickly. "It's just—|Bella being Bella." I tell my mind to believe her.

I gulp. "Did you tell her mum about the—"

"About the prank?" Rikki's eyebrows shoot up. "Of course not."

"Why?" I immediately ask, naïve little girl version of Emma Gilbert coming out to play.

"Um, I don't know, maybe because she would freak out upon the part that three mermaids lured her daughter, also a mermaid, out there for a prank that was just pure teen stupidity." I gulp, realizing she's right. We couldn't tell her we swam out to Mako, in our fishy fashion, and then humiliated Bella for stealing my boyfriend for a night.

Rikki continues. "Anyways, there's nothing to tell. She was fine when we left her right?" I notice Cleo biting her lip, thudding anxiety in her usually tan and rosy, but now pale cheeks, but I delete it's importance from my brain. I'm still trying to think rational, worrying a bit too much then I probably should be—| Or not.

"Yeah, but maybe she got lost or something out in Mako's jungles at night. And, we did have tons of booty traps." I say. I'm humane to be worrying about Bella's safety. She could have gotten lost. She could

have trembled upon our booty traps. I wasn't being stupid, there was just one major secret that was in the way. "Come on, Rikki. We have to tell \_somebody.\_"

Rikki's blue eyes flame up in defense and she starts shaking her head, a bit violently. "Emma, we're not going to tell anybody!" Her temper seems to rise, as she reaches for control. "Bella's probably just hiding out somewhere to get everyone all worried about her. She just wants us to confess so we get into trouble, and she can play the big fat victim!"

I hate to say it, but what Rikki is saying sounds like it's true. Bella didn't show a very nice side to me, so why should I be worrying about her like she's my soul sister? She's not. But, she's a mermaid. Why would she get lost on Mako? She probably is hiding some place, waiting to be able to snicker when we get a night in jail or something, all for a stupid childish prank.

I don't notice it then, but Rikki elbows Cleo. Cleo perks up. "Yeah, and she's disappeared before." She trembles.

"That's right!" Rikki exclaims. "When we were Seniors, there was this one time she passed out on this guy's yacht, and he ran out of gas. Remember that story?" Rikki sounds all too much like she's trying to convince me. Right, convince me not to tell. Convince me to keep Bella's prank a secret, like our own identity that got her there. I, myself, am trembling.

"She was fine." Rikki ends the story. "I'm telling you, she's gonna show." I try to take in stride, that that is a fact. Bella will come back. She will be yelled at by her parents for being such a troubled girl. And, we will be fine. Nothing terrible will happen. We didn't do anything terrible. I try to delete my one last mind comment that asks, \_but what if someone else did? \_

No one ever goes to Mako. No one. Bella's just trying to control this game, I tell myself, and she's not going to win.

"Until then," Rikki's eyes flicker at Cleo and I. "We didn't see her; we don't know anything about it." There's a promise she is edging towards Cleo, and I. One we have to respond to. "Okay?"

All I can hear is the sound of chirping birds within the distance. Rikki's face fades deeper into determination, and finally, with a glance at Cleo's sad eyes, I nod. "Okay."

After this arrangement, Rikki, Cleo, and I leave, back into our perfect untouchable lives like good girls keeping our ugly secrets away from sight, lying in such a perfect flawless way to the entire world.

. . .

I need to investigate. I can't just accept that Bella didn't come home last night. I need to go back to Mako. I need to search for her. I need to purge myself of these feelings of tense guilt.

As I plunge into the ocean's depths, thoughts and voices screech at me. I try to swim faster, and faster, will it all away. Pretending I'm bringing Bella to her safe home, where hopefully her parents will

punish her. But, the thoughts get louder.

\_She didn't come home last night.\_

\_ I have never been anything but nice to you. So what?\_

\_ Bella being Bella.\_

\_ You're such a bitch!\_

\_ She was fine when we left her right?\_

\_ You can't just trap me in hereâ€|\_

\_ Maybe, she got lost or something.\_

\_ She's gonna show.\_

\_ Come on, Rikki, we have to tell somebody.\_

I scream at the thoughts to go away while I stare at the beautiful colorful fish swim around, so simple, all in harmony, all getting along. I will myself not to think about the way I pushed Bella into Mako's moon pool corner, and how her eyes were filled with such betraying fearâ€|

I take a deep breathe as my head peaks up of Mako's moon pool. The frozen wall had melted. When I search, there is no Bella insight. Yet, it feelsâ€|too quiet, creepy.

"Bella!" I hear my crooked voice cry out in the silent aura of air. "Bella!" There is no reply. I try a couple more times, "Bella! Bella! Bella!" Still, no answer. My eyes creep the edges of the volcano cavern, but I only find shadows of the day; shadows of ordinary Mako.

If only I had searched around the bendâ€|I would have met face to face the horror of the truth of what happened last night. But, I never curved the corner of Mako's underground cove. I never found horror locked into an image of true cold murderâ€|the murder of Bella. I never found that, and I had no idea wretchedness was right under my nose. Yet another secret that clung to a mermaid's life. I never knewâ€|which would bring dark trouble. Because, if only I had known, so many things would have been different.

. . .

I loudly cluttered myself and my belongings into the backdoor of my old house. Our old house. My family's. Filled with so many golden memories, I smile. My smile blurries when I see the image of Thomas and mum hugging, in a sad embrace. My throat burns.

I came here to tell mum that I loved her. I was in a you-take-everyone-for-granted-so-tell-them-you-love-them-now mood. I wanted to tell mum that she could tell me what really happened between her and dad. What drove her the part. She could tell me the truth. We could start acting like the mum, and daughter that was portrayed in that hideous film, My Hero, Mum, that I was in High School Sophomore Year.

But, I saw a burden being displaced in mum's eyes as she stared at me, as I watched Thomas, with sadness, nod to her.

"Listen, I'm gonna go now. But, umâ€¦you can call me anytime you want." Thomas says, a trail ofâ€¦heartbreak in his voice. I watch, outsider to the show. Are theyâ€¦breaking up?

"Okay." Mum holds his hand, and with the last sad smile of lost happiness I have seen since her and dad split, Thomas finally gets up from the couch. His eyes meet mine. I gulp. Is this my fault?

"Good night, Emma." He says, with a tingling sensation of bitterness. I smile, and nod. Didn't he receive my email? I apologized and everything. I listen to my heels clap on the ground as I approach my intensified depressed mother, sitting on the couch; her hands covering her face. She looks as sad as she did when dad left.

"Mum? What's going on? Did you guys just break up or something?" My voice cracks. I feel like I'm a tornado, violently spinning out of control, ruining everyone's lives around me.

There's yet another long silence that takes place in my life. Mum seems stuck on what to say. Her eyes are watering.

"It, it wasn't because of me, was it?" Comes a meek sad voice of a girl who feels so much regret. That girl is currently me.

Mum looks up at me, sadness putting her eyes in tangles, and suddenly, I know all I need to know. She proves this by saying, "It was my decision." Is she delirious!

"Ohmygod, mum! I'll go out and talk to him right now. I sent him an email, but maybe he just didn't get it or somethingâ€¦" I edge my mind, at it's wit's end. Why are things crumbling all around me?

Mum shakes her head, despair and regret evident in her own eyes. "Let him go." She whispers. And I forced to stand there, feeling guilty, feeling sad, feeling like a lost outsider in my own old house.

"I'm really sorry, Mum. It's just, Iâ€¦" My mind loses it's high standards, and confidence, and for once; I admit the truth. "I guess I just really messed everything up."

Mum doesn't say anything, but I know she is silently agreeing with me. If only I kept my emotional tauntings out of everyone else's livesâ€¦ Mum would be happy. Bella wouldn't be missing. And perhaps, I wouldn't feel all this guilt and sorrow that I was the actor of some horribly wrong actâ€¦one that seems to be changing everyone's lives.

My mind flattens. I, truly, did mess everything, and everyone up.

\*\*A/N: And, there you go. There wasn't so much of a huge-blow-up in this chapter as it is more of a build-up of tense emotions and secrets, all about to blow up in every single character's face. And lives. Yes, most characters end up going through a blaze of life of tragedy, and Emma, Cleo, Rikki, and Bella ( ) are no different. So, rest your eyes of scurrying reading, breathe a sigh of relief; you aren't murdered, or a murderer, or a mermaid who feels like she has

messed up everything upâ€|and write out your thoughts in an organized or disorganized mannerâ€|in which you will offer me a light of inspiration. No, that isn't an order. It is an opportunity's-knocking door. (I happen to like the idea that R&Ring goes both ways . The good and wholesome; treat others the way you wish to be treated! ).  
-oftaleslonglostofinnocence \*\*\_

End  
file.